

Release Number: 02-014
Date: September 19, 2002
Contact: Troy Kitch

DoD Tests Program to Aid Dependents of Involuntarily Separated Service Members As They Transition to Civilian Health Care Coverage

In Dec. 2001, the National Defense Authorization Act eliminated transitional health care eligibility for dependents of service members who are involuntarily separated under honorable conditions, or who are separated after being called to or retained on active duty in support of a contingency operation.

Now this special eligibility is back in the form of a two-year "Demonstration Project." Recognizing that dependents and departing service members could face undue financial hardship during their transition back to civilian life, the Secretary of Defense recently authorized **transitional health care coverage** for dependents retroactively effective to Dec. 28, 2001.

The Demonstration Project is designed to test how to best address a potential inequity when departing service member health care eligibility remains intact for a limited period of time, but not the service member's dependents. This support will help prevent undue financial hardships for departing service members and their families during transition from military to civilian life. Information and experience gained during this test will provide the foundation for longer-term solutions in the event of future reserve activation or an increase in the size of our military forces.

-MORE-

DEMO DURATION: Two years, unless otherwise extended.

DATES: Retroactively effective to December 28, 2001, dependents of service members who are involuntarily separating from active duty may continue to obtain health care coverage for 60 or 120 days of eligibility.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE: Participation in this demonstration is limited to dependents of separated service members who remain eligible for TRICARE under DoD's transitional health care program. Service members who fall in this category typically fall into two main categories*:

- A member who is involuntarily separated from active duty.
- A member of a reserve component who is separated from active duty resulting from support of a contingency operation if the active duty is for a period of more than 30 days.

**There are other very specific eligibility categories. All eligibility rules are determined by service Personnel offices, not by TRICARE. Please contact your servicing personnel center if you have questions about your eligibility for this Demonstration Project.*

ELIGIBILITY TIME LIMIT: The Demonstration limits dependent's eligibility for a specified time period beginning on the date on which the member is separated as follows:

- For members separated with less than six years of active service, 60 days.
- For members separated with six or more years of active service, 120 days.

-END-